

certain number of professions would, therefore, occupy very different positions in the scale of comparative mortality, if they were only subjected to the operation of a single influence.

G. E.

ART. XIX. Practical Observations on the Venereal Disease, and on the Use of Mercury. By ABRAHAM COLLES, M. D., one of the Surgeons of Dr. STEVEN'S Hospital, and lately Professor of Surgery in the Royal College of Surgeons, in Ireland. London, 1837, 8vo. pp. 351.

The name of Colles, so eminent from its surgical associations, is, we fear, not destined to be raised higher by the work he has just given us. We have not as yet had an opportunity of minutely examining it, nor do we feel any anxiety to do so, after the revelations which a rapid glance has afforded. We have seldom, if ever, met with a book from which some useful instruction was not to be gained, although its extraction has often been attended with the sacrifice of time and pains not adequately rewarded. Such, we fear, would be the result of a close sifting applied to the work of Mr. Colles, the obsolete and heterodox opinions spread through which are by no means atoned for by the valuable facts and interesting cases here and there to be met with. The profession has had a long struggle to disengage itself from some of the old dogmas, and have happily succeeded in a great degree. Dr. Colles, however, would bring it almost back again to the lessons of Hunter. Witness the following opinions relative to the administration of mercury.

"When mercury is exhibited for the use of any other disease, as well as syphilis, we shall find that its sanitary impression on the disease is contemporaneous with its action on the salivary system, and that when the latter effect has not been produced, neither will the former have occurred. If, then, it be so very generally found, that whenever mercury exercises a salutary influence over disease, it at the same time always affects the salivary organs; and if, again, whenever it fail to produce this latter effect, it be also found altogether inoperative in the cure of disease, it is surely a fair and legitimate conclusion to affirm that ptyalism marks the natural and salutary operation of this mineral."

The efficacy of mercury was formerly estimated by the amount of salivation which it excited. Thus, certain venereal symptoms were thought to require a salivation of one pint a day; others two pints, and so on to four or six pints a day in the more obstinate cases. But Mr. Colles desires it to be understood, that he does not wish to estimate the efficacy of mercury by this old measure:

"The degree of ptyalism that I am always anxious to attain," he observes, "is merely an increased secretion of saliva, accompanied by swelling and superficial ulceration of the gums, and sometimes also of portions of the lining membrane of the cheeks and lips; this I am desirous of attaining as a sort of index which denotes first, that the mercury is acting in a safe and salutary mode upon the system; and secondly, that it displays that degree of power or energy of action, which will be sufficient to eradicate the disease."

These humane and philosophical intentions are accomplished by recourse to therapeutic means equally original, namely, the administration of two grains of calomel every night, and the unseemly application of frictions with mercurial ointment to the thighs. After using these, we are told that,

"About the sixth or seventh day ptyalism is fairly established, the gums are swollen, and appear as if inclined to separate from the teeth; they also present a slight degree of ulceration on their edges, especially in the intervals between the teeth; the lining membrane of the cheeks, opposite to the last molares, assumes a leaden colour, and is also swollen, so as to bear the impressions of the teeth; the soft palate also is often swollen, and more red than natural, as if it were slightly inflamed."

But we forbear to trace the description further. Let it not be supposed that this treatment is reserved for the chronic and secondary forms of syphilis, when there might possibly be some excuse, although we regard salivation in any degree as wholly unnecessary and generally injurious in every stage of the disease. The treatment here laid down by Dr. Colles is supposed to be adapted to "the simple case of a young man affected with primary venereal symptoms, but in other respects in perfect health." To resort to measures the direct tendency of which are unquestionably to interfere with the recuperative powers of the system, aggravate by general stimulation the primary symptom, light a train by which this is transmitted to some other tissue, and produce lesions wholly uncalled for, in some of the most delicate structures and important organs, is to set at nought the evidence of the most ample modern observation, and resign one's self to blind routine and the cant of the old pathology. That primary symptoms do occasionally disappear under the untoward treatment advised by Dr. Colles, cannot be doubted. He would ascribe their removal to the eradicating powers of the mercury, whereas we should be inclined to believe that the patient recovered in spite of the action of that agent.

With such views, upon fundamental points, we regard Dr. Colles's book as calculated to retard rather than promote our knowledge of the pathology and treatment of the venereal disease.

In our next number we hope to introduce to our readers a work of a very different stamp,—that of M. Lucas-Championniere; a work based upon the observations of Mr. Cullerier, a practitioner of the highest character, and whose opportunities of studying the disease in question have been unsurpassed.

G. E.

ART. XX. *A Discourse on some of the Diseases of the Knee-joint; delivered before the Massachusetts Medical Society, at their annual meeting, May 31, 1837.* By GEORGE HAYWARD, M. D., Professor of the Principles of Surgery and Clinical Surgery in Harvard University, and Surgeon to the Massachusetts General Hospital. Boston: 1837. pp. 28, 8vo.

Restricted, as an orator necessarily is, to very narrow limits, a minute exposition of the phenomena and modes of treatment of a class of diseases involving so many and important considerations as that of the knee-joint, cannot be looked for in an address like the present. The author has not, indeed, attempted it. He has judiciously aimed merely at tracing the prominent features of some of the affections of the important articulation just named, considering them as they affect the synovial membrane, the articulating cartilages, and the bones, and he has accomplished this object well. He has certainly not presented us with any striking new views, but he has pointed out the best means of studying the diseases in question; has given us a good, plain, common sense sketch of their characters, diagnosis and treatment; and he has the further merit of calling attention to an obscure and important subject—one which has received from surgeons far less attention than its importance ought justly to claim for it, whether we consider the sufferings these diseases cause or the serious consequences they involve.